

RESPECT

By Saro^h!

Notes taken during discussions with Khun Sujin, Bangkok 1979 and during the seminars in Sri Lanka, 1979.

The more understanding is developed the more we will be able to appreciate what it is that the Buddha knew and taught and why he was 'Sambuddha' and why we should respect the teachings. It seems more and more apparent to me that the development of right understanding and of real respect for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha can only be in a moment of a skilful state of mind or kusala citta. While one doesn't know the other's state of mind, one can know more about one's own state of mind. In the 'Anguttara Nikāya' (Gradual Sayings, Book of the Tens, Ch. VI, par.1, One's Own Thoughts), the Buddha encourages us to know more about our own states of mind:

'Monks, though a monk be not skilled in the habit of others' thoughts, at least he can resolve: I will be skilled in the habit of my own thought. Thus, monks, should ye train yourselves.

And how is a monk skilled in the habit of his own thought?

Just as if, monks, a woman or man or a young lad fond of self-adornment, examining the reflection of his own face in a bright clean mirror or bowl of clear water, should see therein a stain or speck and strive for the removal of that stain or speck; and when he no longer sees it there is pleased and satisfied thereat, thinking: A gain it is to me that I am clean - even so a monk's introspection is most fruitful in good conditions, thus: Do I or do I not generally live covetous? Do I or do I not generally live malevolent in heart? Do I or do I not generally live possessed by sloth-and-torpor? Do I or do I not generally live excited in mind? Do I generally live in doubt-and-wavering, or have I crossed beyond it?....wrathful or not?... sluggish or full of energy?....Do I generally live uncontrolled or well-controlled?

Monks, if on self-examination a monk finds thus: I generally live covetous, malevolent in heart, possessed by sloth-and-torpor, excited in mind, doubtful and wavering, wrathful, with soiled thoughts, with body passionate, sluggish and uncontrolled - then that monk must put forth extra desire, effort, endeavour, exertion, impulse, mindfulness and attention for the abandoning of those wicked, unprofitable states.

Just as, monks, when one's turban or head is ablaze, for the extinguishing thereof one must put forth extra desire, effort, endeavour, exertion, unflagging mindfulness and attention, even so for the abandoning of those wicked, unprofitable states....one must do the same.

But if on self-examination a monk finds thus: I do not generally live covetous....uncontrolled, then the monk should make an effort to establish just those profitable states and further to destroy the cankers.'

Phra Dhammadharo reminded us in Sri Lanka that 'even though lay people lead busy lives, they can get to know their busy lives better'. By getting to know one's life better, right now, there will be more understanding of the value of developing all kinds of skilful states of mind or kusala. It seems clear that respect has to refer to kusala according to one's level of understanding and that of course the highest respect for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha is the development of satipatthana or right understanding of the Eightfold Path. For the sotapanna, the misapprehending of virtue and duty (silabbatani) is eradicated. He has no more wrong view about the real meaning of respect; respect is known as a basis of meritorious action (apaciti) and he knows that straightening views follows from respecting kusala.

In Sri Lanka Khun Sujin gave us many reminders about the value of developing right understanding by knowing the difference between moments of kusala and akusala cittas (skilful and unskilful states of mind). At the moment of kusala there is no ignorance....The Buddha taught everyone to have kusala citta at any moment, at any level, because to have kusala citta at any moment is so helpful....It needs right understanding to know whether this moment is kusala or akusala....In a day we can see that there are more moments of akusala than kusala....At this moment of thinking one begins to see whether one thinks with kusala or akusala....When there is no awareness, right understanding cannot grow....There must be right understanding precisely at this moment....The growth of vipassana must begin with

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detachment and go the way of detachment because attachment is "very subtle," and always wins when there is no understanding.... never enough (understanding) because each moment is conditioned.... only the right understanding can eliminate wrong understanding gradually at the moment right understanding arises....'

Khum Sujin also reminded us that we are used to living in a world of concepts, a world of sammuti sacca with little awareness of thinking as thinking. '....Thinking of different realities is not awareness of this moment....An arahat also thinks about concepts after seeing, but maha-kiriya-citta thinks about concepts without akusala....' The arahat would not take an idea of respect for being a reality and by fully understanding the teachings of the Buddha would have the utmost respect for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

The Buddha frequently spoke about how he should be venerated. In the 'Maha-Parinibbana-Sutta' of the 'Digha-Nikaya', before the death of the Buddha, we are told that the 'twin sal-trees burst into bloom, heavenly Erythrina flowers had fallen from the sky, scattering themselves over the body of the Tathagata. Music was sounding in the sky in worship and heavenly choruses were heard to sing in worship of the Tathagata.' The Buddha, however, says:

'....But it is not by all this, Ananda, that the Tathagata is honored, esteemed, revered, worshiped, or venerated; but the priest, Ananda, or the priestess, or the lay disciple, or the female lay disciple, who shall fulfill all the greater and lesser duties, conducting himself with propriety and in accordance with the precepts, by him is the Tathagata honored, esteemed, revered, and worshipped with the best of worship. Accordingly, Ananda, train yourselves, and fulfill all the greater and lesser duties, and conduct yourselves with propriety and in accordance with the precepts.'

The more understanding there is of the Buddha's teachings, the more appreciation there will be for the monk's way of life. One will see how precious is the monk's way of life and how the Sangha have been responsible for teaching and safe-guarding the Dhamma. One will appreciate being able to hear the Dhamma according to one's understanding of its value and will have respect for the Order of monks accordingly. One will appreciate how there are conditions for being virtuous to the degree of being able to leave home and one will see that the Vinaya or rules of the Bhikkhus is their protection and without the Vinaya that there is no Sangha. The more one sees the value of the rules as to what is proper and improper for the Order of monks the more genuine respect one will have for the rules also and concern for the maintenance of them.

There can be many reminders for lay people as well as Bhikkhus when considering more of the value of the monk's way of life. The Bhikkhu is meant to be easy to please and support without asking or hinting for anything more. This can be an excellent reminder for all of us: In the Metta Sutta it describes how one who wishes to attain the state of calm, Nibbana should amongst many other fine qualities be contented and easily supportable. In the 'Khuddakapatha' (Minor Readings and Illustrator, translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, Ch.IX, The Lovingkindness Discourse, par. 33 and 34), we read more about these:

'....he finds contentment, thus he is one content; he is one content with what there is, and 'he is one content equally (with all)', thus he is content (santussaka). Herein, what is called 'his own' is that indicated in the ceremony of Full Admission thus 'Depending on the lumps of alms food' (Vin.1.58,96), and it is whatever among the four requisite-conditions (for the bhikkhu's life) has been accepted by himself. He is called 'one content with his own' when, without showing any alteration (of expression) either at the time of receiving or at the time of using, he makes do with it whethor it is good or bad, whether it is carefully or carelessly given....He is called 'one content with what there is' when he is content with that alone without aspiring to more than that and thus abandons excessiveness of wishes....

He is supported with ease, thus he is easy to support (subharo); he is easily sustained, is what is meant. For a bhikkhu is hard to

*Khum Sujin explained to me that 'duties' refers to all levels of kusala.
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support if, when given his bowl full of special rice, meat and boiled rice, he shows a face of gloomy sullenness or is suspicious, saying in the giver's presence 'What is this you have given?', and gives it away to novices or laymen. When people see that, they keep far away, (thinking) 'A bhikkhu who is hard to support can never be sustained'. But he is easy to support when with cheerfulness and confident face he makes do with what he gets, no matter whether it is poor or superior, little or much. When people see that, they are quite trustful, and they claim thus 'Our venerable is easy to support, he is content even with a little. We ourselves will sustain him', and they do sustain him. It is one such as that who is intended here as 'easy to support'.

Respect, however, must be the moment of kusala citta. Khun Sujin reminded us that 'it is kusala to pay respect. "It's not necessary to show through the body." At this moment there can be respect, it is the matter of kusala citta.... It's impossible to tell by outer appearances because who knows the other's citta?' Khun Sujin further reminded us that if there is thinking of the Buddha at this moment, who can tell whether it is the citta rooted in lobha or attachment which thinks?

Khun Sujin also talked about an example of a monk who couldn't pay respect to Sariputta who was an arahat because the monk had too much mana or conceit. It was pointed out how the growth of respect for the Sangha represented by the monks cannot be fast, as it has to come from 'the heart'. It has to be respect for what is represented with kusala citta at that moment, not just the tradition. It will depend on the individual whether he is familiar with the proper way to treat monks such as how to make an invitation to the monk and the monk should not expect in order to be happy.... The Buddha met other people with other beliefs but still had compassion (although they didn't know the proper way to behave). He taught the monks to observe vinaya for the monks' sake.... and it is the monks' responsibility to accept or deny or refuse if lay people don't know (what's right) or to let lay people know what is proper depending on the lay people themselves, without expectations from lay people, otherwise it will hurt. It indicates that one doesn't follow the teachings at that moment of akusala citta.'

Khun Sujin continues to encourage us to help without hoping for results. If we are talking to others it's important to develop more understanding of whether it is the kusala citta with real concern for the others which speaks at that moment or not. Does one have expectation or real concern for others most of the time? 'Expectation is a different aspect of lobha and lobha is like a virus. It gets through the mind in everyway....through six doorways..! It depends on the listener whether he will have kusala citta or respect. 'Don't mind the other's citta. As long as one has kusala citta, one can do whatever kusala citta conditions with compassion. Each moment is conditioned but one takes it for self, but even that moment of trying is conditioned.... a great task to be aware of one's own citta.... If one still minds about the other's citta, one lacks being aware of one's own citta.... Is it kusala citta or expectation ?.... When one is busy thinking of the other's citta, one forgets to be aware of one's own citta.... watching the other's function or work by forgetting about one's own. The Buddha said not to look at or watch the other's action, just to be mindful of one's own action, whether it's done or not done yet.'

In Sri Lanka, Phra Dhammadharo pointed out how 'getting to know oneself better is the only way to really help others.... To have more metta, karuna, more understanding, to have a more sincere inclination to other people because what has been most helpful to oneself will be most helpful to others also.... One understands oneself better....' By developing more understanding and virtue one will help people to have more respect by understanding more of the teachings. Such a person will not have aversion when others behave another way. Khun Sujin continues: 'See how the world is changing... help with satipatthana out of compassion, not thinking of situation or suitability.... no limits....Help out of kindness and lead the life one considers most suitable for developing satipatthana and knowing one's accumulations better and accepting others as they are.Help by appreciating kusala and understanding of satipatthana...'

In the same conversation about respect Khun Sujin adds that monks can help lay people to understand 'when the time comes about vinaya and how to treat the monks properly.... It's not 2500 years ago.... The monk can be monk when he himself keeps vinaya and has compassion, no expectation.... and can go on easily

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and know more about vinaya by his compassion.... Dhamma and vinaya go together with consideration because it's not just following tradition but following tradition with respect. Anyone can follow tradition, but with respect or disrespect? Without understanding of the teachings, can one really respect the teachings? There will be respect of Sangha by understanding Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha deeper, deeper and deeper with kusala citta.... not just following by being told. Who knows who is following with respect or disrespect?... So help the others to understand dhamma and vinaya, not just vinaya. Instead of thinking lay people should do this, better to say that the order of Samgha allows this and not this.... without expectation and following the vinaya oneself, the monk is allowed to do this and not this.... Be concerned for following vinaya, not expecting respect from lay people.... Follow what is allowed for Sangha and those who are concerned will follow out of respect for Sangha, not of the individual person. When they understand Dhamma, they will know what Sangha means. What is Sangha?

It seems that we all have so many expectations of others and need many reminders of developing more understanding of the teachings now so that there will be more sincere respect. In the 'Anguttara Nikaya' (Gradual Sayings, Book of the Fives, The Fivefold, par.1, Without Respect), the Buddha talks about the value in living in such a way:

'.... But, monks, that a monk, respectful and obedient, dwelling in harmony with his fellows in the godly life, will keep the minor precepts - such a thing shall surely be; and that if he keep the minor precepts, he will keep the learner's code; if the learner's code, the virtues; if the virtues, right views, if right views, right concentration - such a thing shall surely be.'

If there is more sincere respect developed we will learn to be true followers of the Buddha's teachings at those moments of kusala citta. In the opening sections of the Maha-Vagga we read that when a proud, contemptuous Brahman drew near the Buddha and asked what really constitutes a Brahman, the Buddha answered:

'The Brahman who his evil traits hath banished,
Is free from pride, is self-restrained and spotless,
Is learned, and the holy life hath followed,
'Tis he alone may claim the name of Brahman;
With things of earth he hath no point of contact.'